

CITY COUNCIL STUDY SESSION MINUTES

July 17, 2012

The City Council of the City of Norman, Cleveland County, State of Oklahoma, met in a study session at 5:30 p.m. in the Municipal Building Conference Room on the 17th day of July, 2012, and notice and agenda of the meeting were posted at the Municipal Building at 201 West Gray, and the Norman Public Library at 225 North Webster 48 hours prior to the beginning of the meeting.

PRESENT: Councilmembers Gallagher, Griffith, Jungman,
Kovach, Lockett, Williams, Mayor Pro Tem Ezzell

ABSENT: Councilmember Spaulding and Mayor Rosenthal

Item 1, being:

PRESENTATION FROM THE NORMAN POLICE DEPARTMENT REGARDING THE CRIME FREE MULTI-HOUSING PROGRAM.

Mr. Keith Humphrey, Police Chief, said the Crime Free Multi-Housing Program was started in 1992 in Mesa, Arizona, and the main focus of the program was on multi-family housing complexes. He said, in a typical neighborhood, there would be 200 to 300 homes spread out over a large parcel of land and an apartment complex is simply a condensed version of a neighborhood. He said there are more people, more cars, and more activity. He said the City Council Oversight Committee discussed the Crime Free Multi-Housing Program in June and suggested a voluntary pilot program be instituted for one year with two to three apartment complexes that currently want to implement the program. The Oversight Committee requested a monthly report that included crime statistics as well as information on how long the process takes, length of the learning curve, the transition for improvement timeframe, and how many Staff hours are involved.

Chief Humphrey said the program will help apartment complexes improve their quality of life and reduce the perception that apartment complexes cause problems. He said a lot of good people live in apartment complexes so the Police Department wants to change that negative perception. He said the Police Department made a comparison of five apartment complexes in Fort Worth, Texas, using a three year analysis prior to enacting the Crime Free Multi-housing Program and what has happened since. Statistics have shown a 32% to 77% reduction in overall crime, and he believes the City of Norman can have that type of success.

Captain David Teuscher said apartment crime issues consist of drug activity-selling and abusing; residential and auto burglaries; loud parties; vandalism; and a high volume of calls for service due to the high volume of people concentrated in a small area.

Captain Teuscher said Neighborhood Watch and Block Watch Programs work well for established housing neighborhoods, but not for rental properties because of a lack of ownership and sense of pride by renters and some owners. Renters did not care about the property and owners are unable to maintain safe and secure apartments causing renters to move somewhere else. He said the Crime Free Multi-Housing Program was developed using a basic crime prevention idea.

Captain Teuscher said benefits of the program include a stable, more satisfied tenant base; increased demand for rental units with a reputation for active management; lower maintenance and repair costs; increased property values; improved personal safety for tenants, landlords, and managers; and reduction in call volume and criminal activity.

Captain Teuscher said there are three phases to the program as follows:

▪ PHASE ONE

Apartment management training taught by police – an 8 hour course provided free of charge

Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) Survey – police survey property and make suggestions on doors, windows, locks, and exterior lighting minimum standards (this step will incur costs)

Community Awareness Training taught by management and police - led by management

PHASE TWO

CPTED Survey by police – security survey of property

Minimum door, window, and lock standards compliance inspection – verify proper minimum standard materials are used (three-inch screws, deadbolts, etc.)

Minimum exterior lighting standards evaluation – any new lighting will need to meet Norman's Lighting Ordinance requirements

Key control procedures evaluation

Landscape maintenance standards compliance – maximum three feet tall bushes and trees trimmed up to seven feet

100 point security survey of the property – 30 of the points will be required minimum standard points

PHASE THREE

Crime Prevention Social taught by property management and police

Last step to receive full certification

Required annual survey inspection to retain certification

Captain Teuscher said Phase I includes a Crime Free Lease Addendum considered to be the backbone of the program as it is a binding contract between the lessee and lessor and any violation is grounds for termination of the lease.

Captain Teuscher said the apartment complex will receive a certificate stating they have followed through on requirements of each phase and Crime Free Multi-Housing Program standards have been met. They will also receive a Crime Free logo that can be used as free advertising on their website and on any literature given to renters. He said the police will provide a list of certified Crime Free Multi-Housing Program apartment communities on the City's website, which will assist parents in locating a safe environment for college students as well as help apartment complexes attract tenants.

Captain Teuscher said the apartment complex can post a Crime Free Multi-Housing Program sign once they have met all minimum standards. He said the Police Department is suggesting the signs be rented from the City so if the apartment complex falls below the standards the signs would be removed. He said most communities that have the program rent signs for a fee of \$50 and the complex display them as long as they are certified. He said complexes can rent as many signs as they want, but the signs would belong to the City because the Police Department does not want signs posted if the complex is not in compliance.

Captain Teuscher said in order to make the program successful the Police Department will partner with apartment management and communities; City Council; Code Compliance; Fire Department; Cleveland County; Apartment Community Watch (a Neighborhood Watch for apartment communities); Planning Department; local businesses; and International Crime Free Association, which is the parent company of the Crime Free Multi-Housing Program.

Minimum standard requirements will include more exterior lighting; landscape maximum height requirements; deadbolts for all doors; three inch screws for door strike plates and hinges; sliding door locks; sliding window locks; door viewers; and building numbers that are visible from the parking lot. The Police Department researched costs at local businesses and based on a 120-unit apartment complex, total costs to meet minimum requirements would be approximately \$4,437. Captain Teuscher said many of the apartment complexes already have some of these things in place so the cost would be less when the program is implemented.

Chief Humphrey said Midwest City is the only city in Oklahoma that currently uses the program so Norman will be the second if the program is implemented.

Councilmember Gallagher asked what other cities started voluntary participation and did they eventually adopt an ordinance? Chief Humphrey said Midwest City, Oklahoma, and Fort Worth, Texas are mandatory. He felt that because Norman is starting with a voluntary program there is a better chance of the program being accepted in the community. He said the demographics in other communities are totally different than Norman's. He felt that when other apartment complexes see the success of the program they will want to jump on board and felt a voluntary program would be very successful.

Councilmember Gallagher asked if the 32% to 77% crime reduction rate was obtained over a number of years and Chief Humphrey said yes, it is about a three year average. Councilmember Gallagher asked if every step in every Phase would have to be met for certification and Captain Teuscher said out of a 100 point inspection survey, only 30 points are required for certification and the rest would simply be suggestions to improve overall safety of tenants.

Councilmember Gallagher asked if dealing with out of state owners is more difficult and Captain Teuscher said Midwest City found dealing with out of state owners more difficult as far as communication, but once they actually made contact with the owner compliance was met.

Councilmember Gallagher said if crimes are reduced then calls for service are reduced right? Captain Teuscher that is the goal. He said an officer from Midwest City took Norman officers around to the different complexes and described how police use to respond to those areas. The officer said overall calls were reduced and Midwest City has seen a huge benefit to the program.

Councilmember Kovach said the Oversight Committee recommended an update six months after the program started to review whether or not Council should make the program mandatory or if the voluntary program was working. He asked what metrics the Police Department will have Council review at that time to make that decision. Chief Humphrey said the main area will be the number of calls for service and types of calls for service. He said the Police Department expects more calls in the beginning stage because the community will begin getting involved and that is what the police want, but eventually calls will slow down. He said he cannot name one particular benchmark, but overall there should be indication of more involvement from the community and an indication of success in reducing crime.

Councilmember Ezzell said as the program becomes implemented and police experience success, the criminal element removed from the complex is going to go somewhere and if there is a trend of criminals migrating to complexes not involved in the program, what would happen then? Does the plan contemplate the possibility of clustering crime into two or three concentrated areas within the community? Captain Teuscher said that has been discussed and police will need to track those people. The mandatory programs throughout the United States use software programs that track those individuals so the complex manager can contact police to find out if a person has been evicted from other locations. He said, in the future, the Police Department could buy that software. He said police will watch all complexes in the community, not just the voluntary ones, so if police see that trend, they can approach the complex owner to offer them the program. He said if the program becomes bigger and bigger there may be staffing issues eventually.

Councilmember Griffith asked how many officers will be involved in the voluntary program and Chief Humphrey said there are 156 complexes in the City of Norman and if 5% volunteer for the program then one officer should be able to handle the program. If 40 complexes out of the 156 became involved, it would require two to three officers and if 100% became involved, it would require six to eight full-time officers to monitor the program.

Councilmember Jungman asked how police would make sure complexes remained in compliance and if annual recertification would include a complete re-work of the phases. Captain Teuscher said training for managers and maintenance personnel is a one time deal, but if there is new management, then they would have to go through the training. He said installing the hardware for doors and windows will only have to be done once, landscaping will require ongoing maintenance, which should not be a problem and Phase Three requires the complex host some type of social event once a year such as on National Night Out.

Councilmember Kovach said he is supportive of the program, but asked how the City could prevent creating homeless people who cannot get into an apartment because they had one too many loud parties at a complex and were evicted and now are on the list for being a risky tenant. Captain Teuscher said it will depend on how the program is run and that would be up to City management on whether or not software tracking will even be used. He said the City would have to be very careful with that because people do make mistakes and should not be held to a higher standard than another. He said it could depend on the offense such as burglarizing cars versus having loud parties. Chief Humphrey said there will always be an apartment complex that will rent to someone and part of the program trying to help the person in trouble to get back on track and become a more stable citizen.

Councilmember Lockett asked what percentage of calls for service are from apartment complexes and Chief Humphrey said it a small percentage, probably 10% to 20%, but there are different types of calls involving all public safety – police, fire, and emergency services. Councilmember Lockett said she agrees people make mistakes, but the people the police are talking about are usually not one time offenders. Chief Humphrey said in an apartment complex of 120 units, about 5% of the tenants are causing the problem so if police can isolate those, there is a good chance of reducing problems and improving the quality of life in that area. He said people congregate to those problem units and that is what causes problems with burglaries, etc. Captain Teuscher said sometimes you can remove a person or persons from one unit and the problem dies.

Councilmember Jungman asked if high density areas cause more safety concerns and Chief Humphrey said high density areas are difficult. He said the problem is that sometimes the address or apartment number is difficult to locate so it takes longer to find the location. He said this program helps eliminate those problems by requiring larger, easy to read addresses as well as more lighting.

Councilmember Gallagher asked what extra burden the program would place on Code Enforcement and Captain Teuscher said Code Compliance has to be a huge factor and they have been in on discussions regarding the voluntary program and did not feel that would be too burdensome, but their calls could definitely increase.

Ms. Joy Hampton, Norman Transcript, asked if there was interest in including Animal Control to educate tenants on pet licensing, leash laws, etc. Captain Teuscher said the Animal Control Division is part of the Police Department so they will definitely be involved in the meetings with apartment tenants and owners. Chief Humphrey said police has seen a 38% increase in pet licensing this year due to ongoing community education.

Ms. Jayne Crumpley, 423 Elm, asked if the apartment complexes have been selected for the volunteer program. Is complex size involved? If residents have concerns about a particular apartment complex, can they suggest it be included? Captain Teuscher said when dealing with a volunteer program, police can suggest implementing the program, but it would depend on management. He said the two complexes ready to join the program are under new ownership and/or management and that is why police reached out. He said the City will need to define a multi-housing factor as some communities consider ten units as multi-housing and those usually do not have on-site management.

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Mr. Randy Woods, Manager of Willow Properties, said he manages 150 properties that include both ends of the spectrum. He said deadbolts and three inch screw requirements are things that should already be in place, but he is concerned this program will open the door to further requirements. He said his leases have a crime free and drug free provisions so tenants can be evicted if they are in violation; however, judges see that differently sometimes. He said many times tenants call management about noise or disturbances and management will ask if they have called the police and they say yes. When management tries to get a copy of the police report, police will not release the report to management and asked if that policy could change. He said he did like a voluntary program rather than mandatory, but does not have a problem with the requirements.

Mr. Jason Bigaouett, Apartment Manager in Norman, said he agrees with Councilmember Kovach regarding banishing tenants who have made a mistake. He said his company uses a screening program with background and credit checks and criteria is in place based on the types of crimes a person committed. He said he would like more communication with police, because sometimes an incident happens that management does not know anything about and he liked the idea of police having an emergency contact number for management/owners.

Items submitted for the record

1. PowerPoint presentation entitled, "Crime Free Multi-Housing Program," Norman Police Department
2. City Council Oversight Committee minutes of June 6, 2012

The meeting adjourned at 6:32 p.m.

ATTEST:

City Clerk

Mayor